Report of the Citizens' relief committee' appointed after the great Baltimore fire,

REPORT of the "Citizens' Relief Committee" appointed after the Great Baltimore Fire FEBRUARY 7 and 8 1904.

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ON FEBRUARY 7th and 8th, 1904, Baltimore was visited by a conflagration which completely destroyed the whole financial and business centre of our city. In area, the fire covered 160 acres, and many hundreds of buildings were entirely demolished. With only a few exceptions, all of our banks and trust companies were destroyed, and a large number of modern office buildings, commonly known as "sky scrapers", were seriously damaged.

¶ The fire departments of the neighboring cities responded promptly to our calls, and the thanks of Baltimore are due to them, especially to the magnificent efforts of the New York firemen.

¶ The fire was hardly at an end when money and tenders of help poured in from all parts of the United States and elsewhere. The late Hon. Robert M. McLane, then Mayor of Baltimore, with rare foresight determined that Baltimore and Maryland could well take care of its own sufferers.

¶ Fortunately, few homes had been destroyed, although many were thrown out of employment and deprived of their usual means of livelihood.

¶ Baltimore had on several occasions generously aided other stricken cities of our country, and had there been any necessity for so doing, Baltimore would gladly have accepted the generous assistance offered to her. The event has proved the wisdom of our Mayor's

decision. For as the subsequent pages of this pamphlet show, the self-reliant citizens of Baltimore were almost unwilling to accept anything from their own fellow citizens and the State of Maryland. An appropriation of \$250.000 was made by the State of Maryland, but the strange spectacle has been presented of nine-tenths of the appropriation being unexpended.

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IN VIEW of the enormous losses, the remarkably small showing of only \$23,000 disbursed, proves that the virility and self-respect of Baltimore's citizens can not easily be matched, and the spirit of independence and capacity for self-help calls forth, even in this progressive age, wonder and admiration.

The great buildings being erected in every direction, the seizing upon the opportunity to reconstruct the great wharf property, making Baltimore's harbor one of the best on the sea coast; the tremendous strides in commercial activity, together with citizens of such splendid calibre, are a few indications of Baltimore's great future.

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Citizens' Relief Committee.

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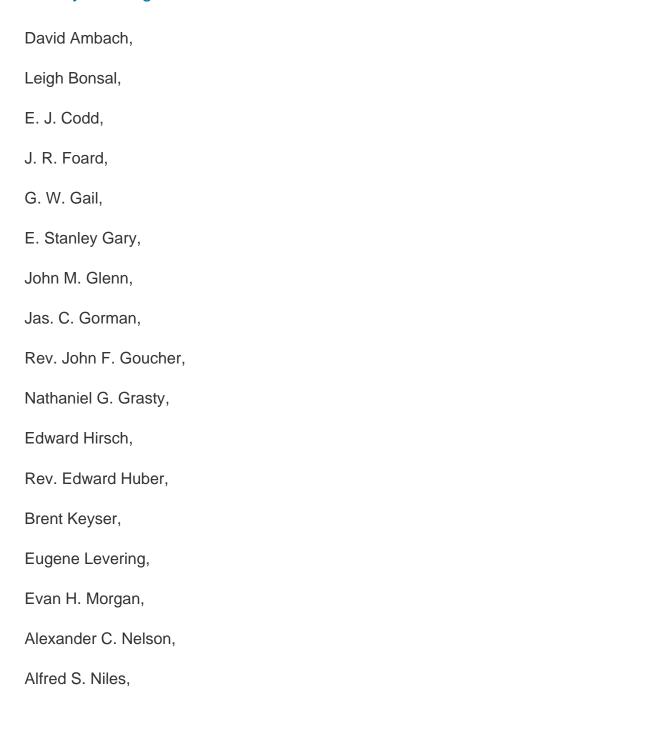
* The late lamented Mayor was succeeded by the Hon. E. Clay Timanus.

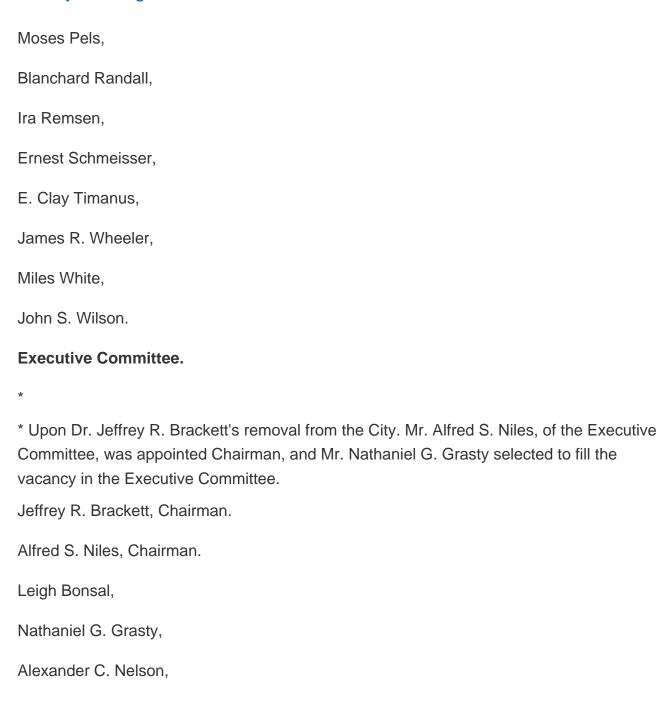
Robert M. McLane, Mayor,

E. Clay Timanus, Mayor. Ex-Officio.

Jeffrey R. Brackett, Chairman.

David Hutzler, Treasurer.





Miles White.

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IMMEDIATELY after the awful fire, a number of public-spirited citizens assembled at the Mayor's request, in the reception room at the City Hall to discuss the appalling situation, and the urgent needs of those left destitute. The result of this conference was the creation by the Mayor of the Citizens' Relief Committee. This Committee organized, and several days after, at a called meeting, the following resolution was adopted:

Resolved, That the Relief Committee appointed by the Hon. Robert M. McLane, Mayor of Baltimore, after careful consideration of the results of the great fire of February 7th and 8th, 1904, in Baltimore, hereby respectfully urges the General Assembly of Maryland to appropriate the sum of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) for the relief of those in actual need and want as the result of said fire, and that said sum shall be placed as a contingent fund at the disposal of His Excellency, Governor Warfield, as provided in Section 32 of the Constitution of Maryland.

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Copy of Section 1 of the Art as passed

AN ACT Placing at the disposal of the Board of Public Works of this State, Hon. Thos. H. Robinson, Chairman of the Finance Committee of the Senate of Maryland, and the Hon. Edward E. Goslin, Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee of the House of Delegates of Maryland, the sum of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the relief of cases of destitution and need caused by the fire in Baltimore of February 7 and 8, 1904; and for the payment out of said money of the militia of the State who were called out for service in Baltimore immediately after said fire.

¶ Section I.—Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Maryland, that the sum of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars is hereby placed as a contingent fund at the disposal of the Board of Public Works of the State, the Hon. Thos. H. Robinson, Chairman of the

Finance Committee of the Senate of Maryland, and the Hon. Edward E. Goslin, Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee of the House of Delegates, to be expended by them to such an extent as they may deem necessary to relieve cases of destitution and need caused by the great fire in Baltimore of February 7 and February 8, 1904. And the Board of Public Works and the Chairman of the two Committees above named in expending the said money for the purpose aforesaid, shall employ such persons or agencies as they may think best for successfully relieving those in need.

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THE final meeting of the Mayor's Advisory Relief Committee was held at three o'clock P. M. in the City Hall, on the eleventh day of August. The Chairman of the Executive Committee read a report of the Executive Committee's work, together with reports from other organizations which had co-operated with the Citizens' Relief Committee. On motion, this report was accepted, and the Chairman was authorized to present it to the Relief Fund Commission, and to turn over to the Relief Fund Commission the balance of \$1,787.61, shown in the report. The Treasurer, Mr. David Hutzler, also presented his report, which had been duly audited, and found to be correct, by an auditing committee composed of Mr. Jas. C. Gorman and Mr. E. J. Codd. The thanks of the Committee were tendered to the Chairman and to the Treasurer of the Committee for their services.

¶ Adjourned.

¶ The following is the Report in full:

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Report to the "Relief Fund Commission" FOR *The Relief of Cases of Distress Caused by the Baltimore Fire, Created by the Act of the General Assembly of Maryland of 1904.*

GENTLEMEN: —The Mayor's Advisory Committee on Relief of Need due to the Baltimore Fire, through its Executive Committee, respectfully I submits to you the following Report:

¶ On Saturday, February 13th, 1904, the late lamented Mayor, Robert M. McLane, appointed our Committee of twenty-six residents of Baltimore, and to it he intrusted the task of investigating the conditions arising from the great fire of the preceding Sunday and Monday, and of recommending and taking such measures as might be necessary for the prompt relief of cases of distress arising from this cause.

¶ The Committee organized on that date and appointed an Executive Committee of five, consisting of Jeffrey R. Brackett, Chairman; Leigh Bonsal, Miles White, Alexander C. Nelson and Alfred S. Niles. Upon Dr. Brackett's subsequent removal from the city and consequent resignation, Mr. Niles was appointed Chairman, and Mr. N. G. Grasty was selected to fill the vacancy, but until April 8th, 1904, the personnel of the Committee remained unchanged as at first appointed.

¶ With his usual activity, tact and executive ability Dr. Brackett at once set to work upon the problem presented to us. Skilled workers were employed to determine how far the fire had resulted in exceptional distress and destitution, and the first conclusion of of the Committee was that there was no condition existing that required a new bureau with elaborate machinery, but that most of 9 the cases could be handled by the old established charitable organizations. It was also determined that so far as possible, sufferers of various nationalities and affiliations should be dealt with by their own friends and associates. In accordance with that idea, our Committee made arrangements with the Hebrew Benevolent Society to specially care for the Hebrews, the German Society to care for the Germans, the St. Vincent de Paul Society to care for the persons connected with the Catholic Church, and the Federated Charities to care for those who were not included in the field of work belonging to other organizations. A great proportion of those people whose homes were destroyed by the fire were Italians, and an Italian Relief Committee was formed with representative Italian citizens at its head, which undertook specially to look after the sufferers among their fellow countrymen.

¶ A meeting of the clergy was called, and ministers of all denominations were asked to look into cases of need which arose in their respective churches. Communications were also had with benevolent and fraternal societies such as the Royal Arcanum, the Elks and the Odd Fellows, with a view to secure their special attention and aid to sufferers who might be affiliated with them. Our Committee agreed to advance such money as these organizations might require, authorizing the organizations themselves, to give immediate relief where only small sums were necessary, but to report to us for our own special investigation cases where considerable amounts were recommended.

¶ In the course of our work we made use of the State Bureau of Industrial Statistics, and procured from it a census from employers of persons who had lost situations by the fire, and were not likely soon to be given work. We also requested the State Employment Bureau to use temporarily such agents as might be necessary in trying, by personal interviews with employers, to get places for the applicants to the bureau for work who had lost their positions by the fire. In order to the proper discharge of our duties we employed at the time of greatest stress one bookkeeper and clerk, who should also investigate cases of need when required, 10 one agent who devoted his whole time to the investigation of cases, and a stenographer. This was practically the full office force which we have ever had, and was reduced from time to time as the service of one or another could be dispensed with.

¶ For our meeting place we used the rooms of the Department of Charities and Corrections at the City Hall, which were placed at our disposal rent free.

¶ The plan pursued by us seems to have worked admirably. The churches very largely took care of their own members who were in distress without calling upon us for aid. The same is true in regard to the beneficial and fraternal orders. The other agencies investigated by their trusted employees each case, and did what we believe to be exceptionally conscientious and effective work.

¶ During the first few weeks of our existence we distributed about \$10,000.00 advanced by charitable individuals in the expectation that it would be repaid from a Legislative appropriation which was suggested and promised almost immediately after the fire. When the Legislative appropriation was made, your Commission repaid these amounts so advanced, and continued the Executive Committee with full power to carry on its work on the lines above indicated.

¶ Our effort has been to create a clear understanding by all that the relief contemplated by the Legislature in making the appropriation was to meet actual need, to secure the necessities of life, or the means by which the sufferer himself would be enabled to procure them, and not a reimbursement against loss by the fire. Persons in need were expected to try every source available before applying to us for assistance. To the extent of \$1,039.00, as will hereafter appear in our Report, the relief was given in the form of loans, the evidence of which we will turn over to the Secretary of your Commission together with our vouchers.

¶ Of course the amount of money spent by us from the State's appropriation does not represent all the money contributed to fire sufferers. Beside much that is unknown to us, we have learned of many special contributions that were made through each of the 11 agencies employed by us to meet needs of sufferers who specially appealed to certain individuals.

¶ The total amount, however, of assistance required by the sufferers through our Baltimore Fire from sources outside of themselves and their own exertions seems remarkably small in view of the enormous losses which were sustained by our City. Nevertheless, we think that our fellow citizens have now adapted themselves to their changed conditions. New applications for relief have so far ceased that we feel that our work is practically over, and that we may now well render an account of our stewardship and be discharged from further work. Our understanding is t h at any cases of need which may arise in the future will be dealt with by the Relief Fund Commission directly, and that this Commission will

also take such means as they may see fit to receive whatever payments may be made in reimbursement of the amounts advanced by us as loans.

¶ We have assisted through the agency of the German Society thirty-two families to the amount of \$614.75; through the Italian Relief Committee we have assisted one hundred and eight families to the amount of \$3,999.02; through the St. Vincent de Paul Society we have assisted sixty-six families to the amount of \$917.58; through the Hebrew Benevolent Society we have assisted two hundred and thirty-eight families to the amount of \$4,296.40; through the Federated Charities we have assisted four hundred and eighty-five families to the amount of \$4,774.02; through our own Committee directly we have assisted one hundred and thirty-four families through gifts to the amount of \$5,986.03; and through loans to the amount of \$1,037.00; making a total of 1,063 families helped by means of the Legislative appropriation.

¶ We have also paid to the Instructive Visiting Nurses Association the sum of \$250.00 for nurses employed to render services to families with illness due to exposure arising from the fire, and \$69.01 for "transportation."

¶ The expenses directly incurred by our Committee have been \$1,269.00, or about 5½ per cent. of the amount handled. There 12 were, however, included in the amounts paid by us to the charitable organizations above named, certain sums paid for expenses necessarily incurred by them in caring for distinctively "Fire Relief Work," the addition of which to our own expense account would make the total between 7 per cent. and 8 per cent.

¶ We have used in all \$23,212.81, forty-two cents of Which however, is interest on loans repaid, making a net expenditure of \$23,212.39. A complete record has been kept of every case that came before us, and we have turned over to your Commission a voucher for every expenditure.

¶ Of course, there may be much just criticism upon our methods and the results accomplished, but we have never acted in any case except upon full investigation, have

never made an appropriation that we did not feel was properly within the province and duty of our Committee, and, at the same time, we do not know of a single applicant for relief who, after the settlement of his case, and explanation to him of the reason for our action, feels that he has any cause of complaint.

¶ We would say in conclusion that the thought uppermost in our minds is one of admiration for the capacity of self-help which has been shown by our City. Although about \$170,000.00 net was appropriated by the Legislature, there never was a rush of applicants who seemed to us to make unnecessary applications for relief simply to get a share of the appropriation. Not only did the churches and fraternal organizations show a disposition to take care of their own members without assistance from the public treasury, but the individual citizens of Baltimore showed the same spirit of independence, and the record of an appropriation of \$170,000.00 for the purposes of relief, of which more than \$146,000.00 is turned back into the public treasury, would seem to us monumental in its character, and a proof the virility and self-respect of our citizens that cannot easily be matched.

¶ While each member of the Executive Committee has given an enormous amount of time and attention and effort to the work, we feel that it is only justice to say that if we have had any success it is 13 pre-eminently due to the skill and knowledge of our first Chairman, Mr. Jeffrey R. Brackett, whose departure from our City and consequent loss from our Committee is a cause for deep regret for us all.

¶ We append brief reports from the organizations which have co-operated with us.

Respectfully submitted, ALFRED S. NILES, Chairman of the Executive Committee Baltimore, August 11th, 1904.

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Federated Charities, 101 W. Saratoga St., Baltimore.

August 9th, 1904.

Citizens' Relief Committee, Mr. Alfred S. Niles, Chairman.

Gentlemen:

On behalf of our Federated Charities, consisting of the Baltimore Association for the Improvement of the Condition of the Poor and the Charity Organization Society, permit me to submit the following summary touching our work as agents of the Citizens' Relief Committee in the interest of the sufferers of the great fire of February 7 and 8.

The fire came in the midst of an unusually cold winter which was already severely taxing our resources. Along with other private charities ministering to the poor in their own homes, we were glad to be made use of as your agents in assisting in the alleviation of the special distress caused by the great conflagration. In addition to our regular corps of fourteen agents and several assistants, in order adequately to meet the situation we found it necessary to employ additional helpers. The New York Charity Organization Society, The Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity, and the Associated Charities of Washington, each volunteered to send a trained worker, and this offer was gladly accepted. At one time we had as many as twelve extra assistants employed, your Committee having volunteered to meet this expense of extra service. The situation reached its climax about the first of March, at which date our heaviest expenditures on behalf of fire sufferers were made. After this time the demands for fire relief gradually diminished.

The following statistics may be of interest to your Committee:

Number of Families Assisted.

244 different families were assisted but once.

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114 " " " but twice.
53 " " " three times.
24 " " " four times.
16 " " " five times.
27 " " " between six and ten times.
7 " " " more than ten times.
Total, 485
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Thus of a total of 485 different families assisted by us as your agents, more than half of them were helped but once, which is the best evidence of the recuperative power of fire sufferers and their own resourcefulness. From the start it was our endeavor to give sufficient assistance to meet the immediate emergency, thus saving repeated applications for relief on the part of those who were referred or came to us for help and who had hitherto been unaccustomed to ask for charitable aid. In many instances the immediate need was for food, fuel or clothing, while in other cases the best service which could be rendered was to supply working equipment such as tools or other outfit. So far as possible families were visited in their own homes and every effort was made to shield applicants from all publicity, names and addresses being regarded as strictly confidential. The charges of "red tape" in method which found an occasional echo through the public press were quite unfounded, as in every instance where relief was needed action was not only prompt, but aimed to meet every pressing necessity.

The amounts expended for various purposes by our Federated Charities as agents for your Committee have been as follows:

For Food, \$1,421.94

For Fuel, 354.45

Cash for Sundries, 799.37

For Clothing, 186.83

For Sick Diet, 123.27

For Furniture, 509.10

For Tools, 447.12

For Rent, 389.90

For Extra Service, 542.04

Total, \$4,774.02

In addition to the above expenditures, we have spent upwards of \$600.00 in special fire relief work, which money has come from private donations contributed for the purpose.

In conclusion, permit us to express our appreciation of the opportunity which you have given us to be of service in this emergency. We feel that your Committee, generously supported as it has been by the State appropriation, has furnished an example of wisely planned and sympathetic relief in time of civic calamity that must have its influence upon other localities in meeting similar emergencies. The confidence of the community in the resourcefulness and recuperative energy of its own people has been abundantly justified, as illustrated by the fact that for the four weeks ending July 9, or scarcely six months after the fire occurred, we spent as your agents for material assistance for fire sufferers but \$91.60. While doubtless another winter we shall experience certain after effects 16 of the

fire, it is hoped that private charity, supported as it always has been by the liberal gifts of the citizens of Baltimore, will be abundantly able to meet the situation without assistance from the public treasury.

Respectfully submitted, WALTER S. UFFORD, General Secretary,

Baltimore Association for the Improvement of the Condition of the Poor, and the Charity Organization Society.

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Hebrew Benevolent Society of Baltimore, 411 West Fayette Street.

August 6th , 1904.

Alfred S. Niles, Esq., Chairman Fire Relief Fund Committee.

Dear Sir:

In reply to your favor this date, would report that we expended the sum of \$5,104.40. Crediting the sum \$808.00 donated by various parties to us for that especial purpose, leaving the net amount of \$4,296.40. Assisted 238 persons or families; some were started in business again, having no insurance; others sewing machines and tools; large number, furniture and clothing, &c.

Our co-operation with the Relief Committee has been of the most satisfactory character, its system elegant, and our work together prompt, effective, with good results.

Very respectfully, MOSES BRENNER, Secretary.

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Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Baltimore, Md.

August 8th, 1904.

Mr. Alfred S. Niles, Esq., Chairman Executive Committee Mayor's Relief Fund.

Dear Sir:

Yours of the 5th inst. requesting a report of the relief work by the St. Vincent de Paul Society just after and for several months immediately succeeding the great fire, is before us, and we cheerfully comply.

Much of our early work, growing out of the fire, was done without any idea of the Society being reimbursed, and therefore the expenditures were not kept separate from our usual or ordinary relief work, and it was only later on, the necessity of separating the two, was impressed upon our conferences. It would be impossible now to grant you a detailed statement of the exact number of persons seeking relief at our hands. With our system of investigation however, covering as it does, almost the entire City, all applicants were promptly investigated, and when found in need and worthy, quickly relieved either in kind or by cash, which latter was only given when it was absolutely necessary or to buy tools or stock, and even then, paid out through a Brother Vincentian. We unearthed a few frauds.

A number of instances were brought to our notice where the applicants lost their all; such as tools and other working implements of various kinds by which a livelihood was earned and many families supported, and all were swept away in a few hours without one cent's worth of insurance to reimburse the losers. It was perhaps a bootblack who earned a support for his widowed mother and several younger brothers and sisters, who before our Committee found and assisted him, had taken up the sale on the streets of newspapers, but who promptly admitted that he was not earning sufficient support and begged us to start him again; or the case of a burnt out merchant only partially insured who sought advice; the insurance was only sufficient to pay off the claims and left nothing to carry on the business. This was not a case for financial aid or which desired help, but one in which the individual sought advice. After several personal interviews and some correspondence, we reached a satisfactory understanding, which was to divide up the

insurance money about equally into three parts between the creditors, the rehabilitation of the plant and stock to run the concern; the credit of the concern was good, and all the creditors cheerfully consented to wait and in doing so, assist in the re-establishment of the firm. Later we were informed that this plan worked out admirably.

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There was the case of a carpenter who lost all his tools which the Committee promptly purchased for him and he was soon at work supporting his family, a wife and several small children. The case of a person who lost everything that they possessed in the world was brought to our attention, investigated and found in need and worthy, and the cash furnished to again start in business.

The case of an orphan who was thrown out of employment was investigated, and board recommended to be paid until work could be procured. They were all most profuse in their thanks and very grateful. There were many others which might be cited, but these few cases are a fair sample and selected at random from the numerous ones coming under our observation.

The society expended several thousand dollars immediately after the fire, which of course included our regular relief work, but a large part of this sum was traceable directly to the fire sufferers, a part (about one-third) only of which we have asked to be re-imbursed for, which your Committee promptly sent us a check for.

Hoping that this brief summary may be sufficient for your Committee, and calling your attention to a statistical report of the expenditure of the \$917.58 received from the State and already furnished the Committee, we beg to remain, on behalf of the St. Vincent de Paul Society,

Yours very truly, WM. F. WHEATLEY, Secretary Particular Council of Baltimore.

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The German Society of Maryland, 219 South Sharp Street, Baltimore.

August 9th, 1904.

Alfred S. Niles, Esq., Chairman Fire Relief Fund Commission.

Dear Sir:

Answering your favor of August 5th, I can herewith give you the report that through the German Society of Maryland the sum of \$616.75, including the donation of \$2.00, has been expended to fire sufferers of German nationality.

31 families and 1 single person have been assisted by our Society, some of them were started in business again, having no insurance, or were not paid by the insurance companies. Furniture, fuel, tools, groceries and clothing and i sewing machine have been granted.

Our work with the Relief Committee has been very satisfactory, earning the best results.

Very respectfully, JOHN D. MEYER, Agent.

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Italian Relief Committee, (For the Fire Sufferers of the 7–8 February, 1904.)

Office No. 112 N. Liberty St., Baltimore, Md.

August 9th, 1904.

Alfred S. Niles, Esq., Chairman, and Members of the Central Relief Committee of Fire Sufferers.

Gentlemen:

I am instructed by the Italian Relief Committee to submit to you, gentlemen, the final Report of our work.

We received through your Committee \$3,999.02; this money was distributed amongst 108 families. In some cases we bought coal, provisions and furniture; in a great many cases we gave a little capital where we set them up in business, and these are doing well now. There was not a single family overlooked that needed assistance. Our Committee was distributed alt over the city looking out for fire sufferers, whether they were burned out or lost their positions on account of the fire. We took care of a great many in getting them employment, both men and women, and every one that we looked after is doing well and making his own living.

In conclusion, this Committee returns its sincere thanks to the Chairman, including every member of your Committee, for the courtesy extended to us, and begs to state that we also ended our work, not only in harmony with each other, but with increase of respect and confidence.

We also return our thanks to the Governor of Maryland as Chairman of the Funds Committee.

I am, with greatest respect, yours, ALEX. CUTINO, *President of the Italian Relief Committee.*

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Italian Relief Committee, (For the Fire Sufferers of the 7–8 February, 1904.)

Office No. 112 N. Liberty St., Baltimore, Md.

FINAL STATEMENT OF THE Italian Relief Committee for the Fire Sufferers of February 7–8, 1904.

Received from the Central Committee of the City of Baltimore, \$3,999.02

Distributed as Follows:

For the relief of 108 families, Cash, Groceries, Provisions, Fuel, &c., \$3,923.19

Stationery, Printing Matter, Stamps, &c., 75.83

\$3,999.02

The Secretary, A. BELLI.

The President, ALEX. CUTINO.

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Statement of Account.

The Executive Committee of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on the Relief of the Sufferers from the Baltimore Fire *with* The Relief Fund Commission created by the General Assembly of Maryland, Act of 1904, Chapter 129.

RECEIPTS.

Drew on Relief Fund Commission in all, \$25,000.00

Received from Interest on Loans, .42

\$25,000.42

DISBURSEMENTS.

As per summary hereto annexed and schedules, \$23,212.81

Balance, \$1,787.61

For which check is hereto attached.

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Statement of Disbursements.

To Federated Charities, Schedule A, \$4,774.02

"Hebrew Benevolent Society, "B, 4,296.40

"Italian Relief Committee, "C, 3,999.02

"German Society, "D, 614.75

"Visiting Nurses' Association, " E, 250.00

"Transportation, "F, 69.01

"Gifts, "G, 5,986.03

"Loans, " H, 1,037.00

"Expenses, " J, 1,269.00

"St. Vincent de Paul Society, "K, 917.58

Total, \$23,212.81

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Relief Fund Commission.

Hon. Edwin Warfield, Governor.

Murray Vandiver,

Gordon T. Atkinson,

Thomas H. Robinson,

Edward E. Goslin.